

(dutiyo bhāgo)

40. Saddhammapakāsinī nāma khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (pathamo bhāgo)  
Paṭisambhidāmaggaṇṇanā
41. Saddhammapakāsinī nāma khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (dutiyo bhāgo)  
Paṭisambhidāmaggaṇṇanā
42. Visuddhajanavilāsinī nāma khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (pathamo bhāgo)  
Apadānaṇṇanā
43. Visuddhajanavilāsinī nāma khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā (dutiyo bhāgo)  
Apadānaṇṇanā
44. Madhurattavilāsinī nāma khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Buddhavaṃsa-  
vaṇṇanā
45. Paramatthadīpanī nāma khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Cariyāpiṭakavaṇṇanā
46. Aṭṭhasālinī nāma abhidhammaṭṭhakathā Dhammasaṅgaṇīvaṇṇanā
47. Sammohavinodanī nāma abhidhammaṭṭhakathā Vibhaṅgavaṇṇanā
48. Paramatthadīpanī nāma abhidhammaṭṭhakathā Pañcappakaraṇavaṇṇanā

Peter Skilling  
Nonthaburi

## Some Citation Inscriptions from South-East Asia

This article reports on recently discovered citation inscriptions from three sites: Angkor Borei in Cambodia, Si Thep in Siam, and Go Xoai in Vietnam. As far as I know the inscriptions from the first two sites have not been published in a European language. The section on Go Xoai is a summary of an article published in Bangkok in 1999.

I use the term “citation inscription” for lithic or other engraved records that give excerpts from Buddhist texts. Such inscriptions are not original compositions, although they may be combined with original material. In South-East Asia the greatest concentrations of citation inscriptions known to date are in Burma (from the Pyu kingdom of Śrīkṣetra) and Siam (from the Dvāravatī period on).<sup>1</sup> Smaller numbers have been found in Java, Borneo, and the middle Malay peninsula.<sup>2</sup> Very few have been found in Laos, or in Cambodia and Vietnam, in the areas known to historians as Funan, Chenla, and Champa.

1. Preliminary report on a Pāli inscription from Angkor Borei, Cambodia

An inscription of considerable importance and interest was recently excavated at Angkor Borei in southern Cambodia, a site that scholars have tentatively identified as the capital of the ancient kingdom of Funan. I am grateful to Dr Michel Tranet (Minister of Culture and Fine Arts, Kingdom of Cambodia) for making a copy of an estampage of the

---

I am grateful to Ven. Dhammasāmi and Steven Collins for their corrections and comments.

<sup>1</sup> See Peter Skilling, “The Advent of Theravāda Buddhism to Mainland South-East Asia”, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 20.1 (1997), pp. 93–107, for a preliminary and already outdated list.

<sup>2</sup> I do not count here the clay sealings inscribed with *ye dharmā* or *dhāraṇīs*, which have been uncovered in their hundreds at several sites in the region.

inscription available through the good offices of Dr Olivier de Bernon (École française d'Extrême-Orient, Phnom Penh).

The text is engraved in Pallava script on the four faces of a rectangular clay brick.<sup>3</sup> At present further details about dimensions, context, and find-spot are not available. In general the script resembles that of some of the *ye dhammā* inscriptions from Siam, such as those on bricks from Phra Pathom Chedi (Nakhon Pathom), that engraved on the back of a standing Buddha image kept in Wat Mahathat (Ratburi), or the *Sāgaramatiparipṛcchā* inscription from Site 2 in Kedah. Some letters are peculiar, but a detailed palaeographical study must await a better reproduction of the epigraph than that available to me at present. Long vowels, *niggahīta*, and conjunct consonants are all clearly marked. On palaeographic grounds the inscription may be dated to the seventh or eighth century.

The language of the inscription is Pāli. Until the discovery of the Angkor Borei inscription the earliest Pāli epigraph known from Cambodia was K. 754, the record of a donation made by Śrīndravarman (Sirisirindavamma) in Śaka era 1230 (1308 CE), from Kok Svay Cek south of the Western Barai near Angkor Wat. Śrīndravarman's record is bilingual, inscribed on a stone stele 1.70 metres in height, one side with twenty lines of Pāli verse in ten *ślokas*, the other with thirty-one lines of Khmer prose.<sup>4</sup> If K. 754 is no longer the earliest Pāli inscription in

<sup>3</sup>"Pallava" is a catch-all label for the early scripts of South-East Asia, which are modelled on scripts from South India related to those used by the Pallavas. The dates ascribed to undated inscriptions in this paper are only approximations.

<sup>4</sup>George Cœdès, "La plus ancienne inscription en pāli du Cambodge", in *Articles sur le pays khmer* (Paris, 1989), pp. 282–89 = *Études cambodgiennes* XXXII, originally published in *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* XXXVI (1936), pp. 14–21. An inscription on a large stone image, now in the National Museum, Phnom Penh, is said to be in Pāli and to date from the 13th to 14th centuries. Thus it may be earlier than K. 754. The lettering, on a rectangular slab raised above the head with both hands by a seated monk (who has the elongated ear-lobes of a Buddha) appears to be unfinished; the parts that are visible are phrases of homage. See Nadine Dalsheimer, *Les collections du Musée national de Phnom Penh* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient,

Cambodia, it remains the earliest bilingual. As an early epigraph from the period during which the Mahāvihāra Theravādin Vinaya lineage of Sri Lanka was introduced to (or rose to prominence in) the region, it bears witness to the change of classical language from Sanskrit to Pāli. K. 754 also remains the earliest dated Pāli *composition* from Cambodia, since, as we shall see, the Angkor Borei inscription is a *citation* of classical texts. The next dated Pāli inscription, also a composition, is that of Vat Nokor (K. 82), dated Śaka 1488 (1566 CE).

#### Text of the inscription<sup>5</sup>

##### Face 1

- (1) ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetum tathāgato āha
- (2) tesam ca yo nirodho evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇo [1]
- (3) yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā (ā)tāpino jhāyino brāhmaṇassa
- (4) . . <sup>6</sup> athassa kaṅkhā vapaya(ṃ)ti savvā yato pajānāti sahetu
- (5) dham(m)a(ṃ) [2]

##### Face 2

- (1) yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā ātā(p)ino jhāyino brāhmaṇassa . .
- (2) athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti savvā (ya)to khayam paccayānaṃ avedi [3]

##### Side 1

- (1) yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā ātāpino jhāyino brāhmaṇassa . .

##### Side 2

- (1) athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti savvā vidhūyan titthati mārasenaṃ [4]

2001), pièce no. 85. According to Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* VIII (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1966), pp. 210–11, K. 888, from Phrah Khan in Kompong Thom. A closer reading is needed to see whether the inscription can be called Pāli. For now, see Saveros Pou, *Nouvelles inscriptions du Cambodge* I (Paris: EFEO, 1989), pp. 14–15.

<sup>5</sup>My transcription follows the line-breaks of the original; I have supplied line numbers in parentheses at the beginning of the lines. Neither verses nor faces are numbered. My provisional numbering of faces and sides starts with the *ye dhammā* verse and then follows the sequence of the *yadā have* verses in the Mahāvagga. I have separated the words, written without break in the inscription, and placed letters that are indistinct within parentheses. I hope to improve on the readings when a better copy becomes available.

<sup>6</sup>In each case, after the half-verse ending with *brāhmaṇassa*, there follow two letters or symbols that I am unable to decipher, indicated here by ". .".

1.1. The *ye dhammā* verse

The first text is the *ye dhammā gāthā*, which needs no introduction. There are numerous epigraphic examples from mainland and maritime South-East Asia, in Pāli, Prakrit, and Sanskrit, from Arakan to the Malay peninsula to Java to Borneo. The many examples from Siam, inscribed in varieties of the Pallava (or rarely, Nāgarī) script on a wide range of objects and materials, have not yet been subjected to a comprehensive palaeographical and linguistic study. The verse as given in the present inscription agrees perfectly with the Vinaya Mahāvagga.<sup>7</sup>

This is only the second ancient *ye dhammā* inscription to be discovered in Cambodia. The other example, engraved on the back of a standing Buddha image from Tuol Preah That (to be discussed in section 3.1), is not in Pāli but in a related Prakrit.

1.2–4. The *yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā* verses

Like the *ye dhammā* verse, verses 2 to 4 are found in the Vinaya Mahāvagga. The three verses in *upajāti* metre come at the beginning of the very first chapter, Bodhikathā.<sup>8</sup>

Verses 2 and 3 agree with the Mahāvagga, with the exception that in pāda *b* the inscription has *jhāyino* against the *jhāyato* of the Mahāvagga and that pāda *c* has *savvā* in place of *sabbā*. *jhāyino* is a respectable alternate to *jhāyato*. The use of *-vv-* in place of *-bb-* in early South-East Asian Pāli has been noted by von Hinüber, and since confirmed by further inscriptions.<sup>9</sup> To these we may add the present document, in which *ba* and *va* are clearly distinguished.

Verse 4 also has *jhāyino* and *savvā*. Here the last two pādas differ

<sup>7</sup>Vin I 40,28 (unless otherwise noted, references to Pāli texts are to editions of the Pali Text Society by volume, page, and line).

<sup>8</sup>Vin I 2,3–26.

<sup>9</sup>Oskar von Hinüber, “Epigraphical Varieties of Continental Pāli from Devnimori and Ratnagiri”, in *Buddhism and its Relation to Other Religions: Essays in Honour of Dr. Shozen Kumoi on His Seventieth Birthday*, (Kyoto, 1985), pp. 185–200; Peter Skilling, “New Pāli Inscriptions from South-East Asia”, *JPTS XXIII* (1997), pp. 128–29.

from the Mahāvagga. The inscription repeats pāda *c* of the preceding verses, and ends with *vidhūyan titthati mārasenaṃ*. Presumably the scribe or stone-carver has dropped the *-pa-* of *vidhūpayan*, and the pāda should read *vidhūpayan titthati mārasenaṃ* with the Mahāvagga. Note also the use of dentals rather than retroflexes in the *-ttha-* of *titthanti*. More serious is the inscription’s complete omission of the last pāda of the Mahāvagga version. Whether this is to be put down to error or to genuine recensional variation cannot be said.

I give here the Mahāvagga text according to the Pali Text Society edition, indicating words or phrases that differ from the inscription by placing them in italics.

yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā ātāpino *jhāyato* brāhmaṇassa  
ath’ assa kaṅkhā vapayanti *sabbā* yato pajānāti sahetudhamman ti.  
yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā ātāpino *jhāyato* brāhmaṇassa  
ath’ assa kaṅkhā vapayanti *sabbā* yato khayamaṃ paccayānaṃ avedī ti.  
yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā ātāpino *jhāyato* brāhmaṇassa  
vidhūpayamaṃ *titthati* mārasenaṃ *suriyo* ’va *obhāsayam antalikkhan* ti.

The Bodhikathā verses are also given in the Udāna of the Khuddhaka-nikāya, one in each of the first three suttas of the first chapter, Bodhivagga.

The *yadā have* verses in other inscriptions

The Angkor Borei inscription is not the only epigraph to give the *yadā have* verses: they have enjoyed currency in inscribed form over a wide area and a long stretch of time. The prose of the Bodhikathā from the beginning up to the end of the first *yadā have* verse is given in an early inscription from Kunzeik in Burma.<sup>10</sup> All three *yadā have* verses are engraved on an octagonal stone pillar, unfortunately in fragments, from Sap Champa (District Chai Badan, Lopburi, Siam) which is dated to the

<sup>10</sup>Aung Thaw, *Historical Sites in Burma* ([Rangoon] 1972), pp. 110, 111; and Peter Skilling, “The Advent of Theravāda Buddhism to Mainland South-East Asia”, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 20.1 (1997), n. 7.

seventh or eighth century.<sup>11</sup> The second verse is inscribed on a broken stone slab from Ban Phrommadin (District Khok Samrong, also in Lopburi Province), and is dated to the eighth or ninth century.<sup>12</sup> These dates are arrived at on palaeographic grounds.

The verses continued to be inscribed in the Ratanakosin or Bangkok period. They are given on the nineteenth-century gold plates installed in a *cetiya* at Wat Pho (Wat Phra Chetuphon) in Bangkok. The first *yadā have* verse is inscribed as a caption to a relief panel representing the Awakening on the eastern face of the base of a gold-plated *cetiya* in the central sanctum of the *cetiya* at Wat Bovoranivet, also in Bangkok. There the verse is described as the first *udāna* of the Blessed One (*idaṃ tassa bhagavato paṭhamam udānam*).

What is the importance of the verses, and why were they selected for inscription? We cannot, of course, read the minds of those who conceived of and sponsored the inscriptions, and we do not possess any ritual manuals from the period (if there were any, since many of these practices were transmitted orally). It is, however, certain that the verses have a claim to pre-eminence: in the literature of all known Buddhist schools they are spoken by the Blessed One immediately after his Awakening.

The Theravādins preserve two traditions regarding the first words spoken by the Awakened One (*paṭhamabuddhavaṇṇanam*). According to the Samantapāsādikā, the honour goes to the *anekajāti saṃsāram* verses from the Dhammapada,<sup>13</sup> although “according to some” the *yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā* verses merit this status.<sup>14</sup> But while the *yadā*

<sup>11</sup>Supaphan na Bangchang, *Wiwathanakan ngan khian phasa bali nai prathet thai: charuk tamnan phongsawadan san prakat* (Bangkok, 2529 [1986]), pp. 21–25.

<sup>12</sup>Supaphan, op. cit., pp. 39–40.

<sup>13</sup>Dhp 153–54, Jarāvagga 8–9 = Udānavarga 31:6–7. For the narrative see Dhp-a III 127–29 where we learn that the verses are common to many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas (*anekehi buddhasatasahashehi avijahitam*).

<sup>14</sup>N.A. Jayawickrama, ed., tr., *The Inception of Discipline*, § 19, *keci yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā ti khandhake udānagātham āhu*.

*have* verses occur in the narrative of the events after the Awakening in the Vinayas of known schools, including, of course, the Theravādin Mahāvagga, the *anekajāti* verses have no canonical narrative context, since they are transmitted only in collections like the Dhammapada. It is not clear when or where the latter came to be designated as *paṭhamabuddhavaṇṇana* by the Theravādins. In the *Shan-chien-p'i-p'o-sha*, the Chinese translation of a Vinaya text related to the Samantapāsādikā, both traditions are reported.<sup>15</sup>

In his commentary on the Udānavarga, the North Indian scholar Prajñāvarman gives two *nidānas* for the *anekajāti* verses. The first, most probably the one generally accepted by the Sarvāstivādin tradition to which Prajñāvarman belonged, reports that the verses were recited by the Buddha to an unspecified monk. The second gives a *nidāna* reported by “others”:<sup>16</sup>

Others say the verses were spoken by the Bodhisattva beneath the bodhi tree when minions of Māra came to disturb his mind.

This *nidāna* agrees with the Theravādin tradition in situating the verse at the site of Awakening, but places it at a different point: before the Awakening, when the Blessed One was still a bodhisattva.<sup>17</sup> From these references (and others may well be preserved in other sources, such as the Chinese Dharmapada literature) we can conclude that, as with many verses of the Dhammapada and Udānavarga collections, the *anekajāti* verses had no ancient narrative context, and as a result the *nidānas* supplied by different schools or traditions disagree.

<sup>15</sup>P.V. Bapat and A. Hirakawa, *Shan-Chien-P'i-P'o-Sha, A Chinese version by Saṅghabhadra of Samantapāsādikā* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1970), pp. 9–10.

<sup>16</sup>Michael Balk, ed., *Prajñāvarman's Udānavargavivaraṇa*, Vol. 2 (Bonn, 1984), p. 903.30, *gāṇ dag ni byañ chub kyi śīṇ druṇ na bzuḡs pa na bdud kyi pho ña la sogs pas sems rnam par dkrugs pa'i phyir 'oṇs pa na byañ chub sems dpas gsuṇs so zes zer ro*.

<sup>17</sup>For the alternate *nidānas* cited by Prajñāvarman and their relation to the Theravādin tradition see Peter Skilling, “Theravādin Literature in Tibetan Translation”, *JPTS* XIX (1993), pp. 143–53.

Whatever the case, the *anekajāti* verses are given in South-East Asian inscriptions, often together with the *yadā have* verses. I cite here several examples from Siam. They follow the *yadā have* verses on the above-mentioned octagonal pillar from Sap Champa. They are cited on a gold plate found in the main *cetiya* at Wat Phra Non (Tambon Phra Non, District Nakhon Luang, Ayutthaya Province), now in the Chao Sam Phraya National Museum in Ayutthaya. The inscription, in Tham Lanna letters, dates to the twentieth century BE (that is, about the fifteenth century CE).<sup>18</sup> The *anekajāti* verses are given twice on the nineteenth century gold plates in the *cetiya* at Wat Pho (Wat Phra Chetuphon), Bangkok. In the second case they precede the three *yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā* verses.

In addition to inscriptions, the *anekajāti* verses are included in the collections of ritual texts in the large illuminated *khoi* paper manuscripts of central Thailand<sup>19</sup> while the *yadā have* verses are given in the *Royal Chanting Book*, where they bear the title *Buddha-udāna-gāthā*.<sup>20</sup> Both are recited to this day by members of the Northern Thai, Central Thai, and Burmese *saṃghas*, especially during the consecration of Buddha images. In Nepal, at the Śākyasiṃha Vihāra in Patan (Lalitpur), Theravādins recite the *anekajāti* verses in Pāli together with a verse translation into Newar by Prajñānanda, a former Saṃghamahānayaaka.<sup>21</sup>

Sanskrit parallels to the *yadā have* verses

As noted above, in the available narratives of the different schools, the *yadā have* verses are spoken after the Awakening, although not necessarily at the same point. The Sanskrit Catuspariṣat-sūtra of the Central Asian Sarvāstivādins reports that after staying at the residence of Mucilinda Nāgarāja the Buddha returned to the seat of Awakening

<sup>18</sup>Supaphan, op. cit., pp. 70–73.

<sup>19</sup>See e.g. *Samut khoi* (Bangkok: Moradok Thai, 2542 [1999]), p. 193.

<sup>20</sup>Somdet Phra Sangkharat (Pussadeva), ed., *Suat mon chabap luang*, (Bangkok: Mahamakut Ratchavithayalay, 16th imp., 2538 [1995]), p. 85.

<sup>21</sup>Information courtesy of Ven. Vipassī (Dhammārāmo), Wat Bovoranives, Bangkok, 1 January 2002.

(*bodhimaṇḍa*) and contemplated conditioned arising in natural and reverse order for one week, remaining in the same cross-legged posture. At the end of the week he emerged from *samādhi* and uttered seven verses: parallels to the three *yadā have* verses of our inscription plus four others based on the same model. The account in the Saṅghabhedavastu of the Gilgit Vinaya is similar. In the Sanskrit Udānavarga, as restored from fragments from Central Asia, the verses are further developed on the same pattern to make a set of thirteen verses, placed at the end of the last chapter, Brāhmaṇavarga (XXXIII). In all three traditions there are some variants. The verses that correspond most closely to our verses are given in the Table. The number in parentheses at the end of each verse gives its position within the set of the particular tradition.

The Catuspariṣat-sūtra introduces the verses as *gāthā* (7.5, *tasyāṃ velāyaṃ gāthā babhāṣe*), as does the Saṅghabhedavastu (I 127.24, *tasyāṃ velāyaṃ gāthā bhāṣate*). Vasubandhu, in his commentary on the Gāthāsaṃgraha, cites them as an example of the *udāna-aṅga* in the twelve-fold classification of the Buddha's teaching. In the Mahāvagga and Udāna the verses are described as *udāna*, introduced by the stock phrase: *atha kho bhagavā etam atthaṃ viditvā tāyaṃ velāyaṃ imaṃ udānaṃ udānesi*. The Mahāvastu uses the phrase only for the third verse: *atha khalu bhagavān tāye velāye imaṃ udānaṃ udānaye*.

## 2. Two Pāli inscriptions from Si Thep in Siam<sup>22</sup>

Two fragmentary Pāli inscriptions from the archaeological site of Si Thep (now the Si Thep Historical Park, Petchabun Province), are displayed in the Ramkhamhaeng National Museum, Sukhothai. Si Thep was an important moated city during the Dvāravatī period or the second half of the first millenium of the Christian Era, and is the northernmost find-spot of old Pāli epigraphs in Siam.<sup>23</sup> Among the antiquities

<sup>22</sup>I am grateful to Amara Srisuchat (Director, Ramkhamhaeng National Museum) for permission to examine and photograph the inscriptions.

<sup>23</sup>Although convention dictates that one place Si Thep within the "Dvāravatī period", I do not place it within the Dvāravatī polity, suspecting that Si Thep



recovered from the site are several masterful images of brahmanical deities (including Sūrya), a large stone *dharmacakka*, and one of the oldest Sanskrit inscriptions recovered in Siam.<sup>24</sup> The fact that the Buddhist records of Si Thep are in Pāli suggests that the Theravādin monastic order was present there. A very preliminary estimate for the date of the inscriptions, on palæographic grounds, is from the sixth to the eighth century.

### 2.1. Paṭiccasamuppāda inscription

The fragmentary inscription is engraved in Pallava letters on the two sides of a circular stone object, the function of which is not known. The text is drawn from the Bodhikathā of the Mahāvagga of the Vinaya, which describes how just after his Awakening the Buddha sat for one week in the same posture beneath the Bodhi Tree, the “Tree of Awakening”, experiencing the bliss of liberation, and contemplating dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). The text preserved in the inscription, given here in bold type, agrees perfectly with that of the Mahāvagga:<sup>25</sup>

tena samayena buddho bhagavā uruvelāyaṃ viharati najjā nerañjarāya tīre bodhirukkhamūle paṭhamābhisambuddho. atha kho bhagavā bodhirukkhamūle sattāhaṃ ekapallaṅkena nisīdi vimuttisukhapaṭisaṃvedī. atha kho bhagavā rattiyaṃ paṭhamam **yāmaṃ paṭiccasamuppādam anuloma-paṭilomaṃ manasākāsi** avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā saṅkhārāpaccayā viññāṇam viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanaṃ saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso phassapaccayā vedanā vedanāpaccayā taṇhā taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ upādānapaccayā bhavo bhavapaccayā jāti jātipaccayā jarā-maraṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā saṃbhavanti **evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa** samudayo hoti. avijjāya tv eva asesavirāganīrodhā saṅkhāranīrodho saṅkhāranīrodhā saḷāyatana-nīrodho

was a regional power in its own right.

<sup>24</sup>For the last see B. Ch. Chabra, *Expansion of Indo-Aryan Culture during Pallava Rule (as evidenced by inscriptions)* (Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1965), pp. 70–72 and pl. 7.

<sup>25</sup>The Pāli is from Vinaya Mahāvagga, Bodhikathā, Syāmaratṭha Tipiṭaka, Vol. 4, pp. 1–2 = Vin (E°) I 1–2.

saḷāyatana-nīrodhā phassanīrodho phassanīrodhā vedanā-nīrodho vedanā-nīrodhā taṇhā-nīrodho taṇhā-nīrodhā upādāna-nīrodho upādāna-nīrodhā bhavanīrodho bhavanīrodhā jātinīrodho jātinīrodhā jarāmarāṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti **evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa** nīrodho hotī ti.

### 2.2. Ye dhammā inscription

The *ye dhammā* verse is inscribed in Pallava script on the front of the pedestal of a stone image of the seated Buddha image from Si Thep. The surviving text is placed in bold type:

ye dhammā hetuppabbhavā tesam hetum tathāgato āha  
tesam ca yo nirodho evaṃvādī **mahāsamaṇo** ||

### 3. A gold-plate inscription from southern Vietnam

A gold-plate citation inscription was discovered at Go Xoai in Long An, a province south of Tay Ninh and west of Ho Chi Minh City, which borders the Prey Veng and Svay Rieng provinces of Cambodia.<sup>26</sup> It is complete and undamaged. The text is inscribed in five lines of clear, careful script on a gold plate, which seems to have been folded lengthwise into four equal parts at some point in its history. The following

<sup>26</sup>The inscription, which is kept in the Long An Provincial Museum, was published by Ha Van Tan in an appendix to Le Xuan Diem, Dao Linh Con, and Vo Si Khai, eds., *Van Hoa Oc Eo: nhung kham pha moi/Oc Eo: Recent Discoveries* (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 1995) (I apologize for the lack of appropriate diacritics for Vietnamese). Ha Van Tan has published an additional note on the inscription, “Ghi chu them ve minh van o Go Xoai (Long An)”, in *Nhung phat hien moi ve khao co hoc nam 1997* (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 1998), pp. 694–696. For a detailed study see Peter Skilling, “A Buddhist inscription from Go Xoai, Southern Vietnam and notes towards a classification of *ye dharmā* inscriptions”, in *80 pi satsadachan dr. prasert na nakhon: ruam bot khwam wicchakan dan charuk lae ekasan boran* (80 Years: A collection of articles on epigraphy and ancient documents published on the occasion of the celebration of the 80th birthday of Prof. Dr. Prasert Na Nagara) (Bangkok, 21 March 2542 [1999]), pp. 171–87. I am grateful to Olivier de Bernon (Phnom Penh) and Ian Glover (Ditton Priors) for providing materials essential to this research.

reading is based on the published photograph.<sup>27</sup>

- (1) ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetum tathāgato avaca tesañca yo nirodho evaṃvādī mahāsamano ||
- (2) duḥkhaṃ duḥkhasamutpādo duḥkhasa ca atikkamo airo atth'āṅgiko maggo duḥkhopaśamagāmiko ||
- (3) tadyathā || daṇḍake || paṇḍakell kauraṇḍe || keyyūre || dantile || dantile || svāhā ||
- (4) tadyathā || adhame amvare amvare parikuñja nāṭa nāṭa puṣkarādhahā jala khama khaya ilīmī
- (5) liki limili kīrtti caramudre mudramukhe svāhā ||

The script is a variety of South-East Asian Pallava, similar to that of the Khao Rang inscription from Aranyaprathet (Prachin Buri), which bears the date Śaka 561 = 639 CE; the Khao Narai inscription from Saraburi, dated palaeographically to the twelfth century BE (= seventh century CE); and the Wat Sema Muang inscription from Nakhon Si Thammarat, which bears a date equivalent to 775 CE.<sup>28</sup> We may therefore suggest a seventh or eighth century date.

The inscription contains four texts: the *ye dharmā* verse, the *duḥkha duḥkhasamutpāda* verse, and two mantras.

### 3.1. The *ye dharmā* verse

The first text is the *ye dharmā* verse, in a recension close but not identical to the Pāli. In the Go Xoai inscription, the use of *sa* instead of retroflex *ṣa* in *tesam*, *tesañ*, and *mahāsamano* — in all three cases quite clear — is noteworthy. In both cases the genitive plural third person pronoun *tesam* (*tesañ*) has short *a*, which agrees with the Pāli form. For the aorist of *vac*, the record has *avaca*, where the Pāli has *āha* and some Sanskrit versions have (*hy*) *avadat*.<sup>29</sup> Versions of the verse with *avaca*

<sup>27</sup>My transcription follows the line-breaks of the original; I have supplied line numbers in parentheses at the beginning of the lines.

<sup>28</sup>*Charuk nai prathet thai* (Inscriptions of Thailand) (Bangkok), I 35–39, II 46, and I 187–222, respectively. I am grateful to Kannika Vimongkasem (Silpakorn University) for her guidance regarding the palaeography.

<sup>29</sup>The form *avaca* (aorist of *VAC*) is known in Pāli: see PED 598a, s.v. *vatti*, which refers to Ja I 294 and Pv II 3, 19.

are known from other inscriptions. Especially intriguing is the fact that one other example of the *avaca* version is known from the region, engraved on the back of a standing Buddha image from Tuol Preah That in Rolan Cak, Kompong Speu province. The image, 0.925 metres in height, is now in the Musée Guimet, Paris (MG 18891). Cœdès describes the inscription as being “en petits caractères pré-angkorien, d’aspect assez ancien”.<sup>30</sup> It has been assigned to the seventh century on the basis of palaeography.<sup>31</sup> The text reads:

ye dhammā hetuprabhavā tesam hetum tathāgato avaca  
tesañ ca yo nirodho evaṃvādī mahāsamano.

The language of the record, a Prakrit related to Pāli, differs from the Go Xoai inscription in only one place: *hetuprabhavā* in place of *hetuppabhavā*.

As far as I know, the Go Xoai gold plate inscription is only the second *ye dharmā* inscription to have been found in Vietnam. One other comes from further north, from Champa, at a site in Khanh Tho Dong village, Chien Dang canton, huyen Ha Dong. Here some bricks were found, and an image of the Buddha, 21 cm in height, seated “à la mode européenne sur des lotus peu distincts”. On the back is the *ye dharmā* “grossoièment gravée”.<sup>32</sup> Neither the image nor the inscription has been published.

### 3.2. The *dukkhaṃ dukkhasamuppādam* verse

The second text in the Go Xoai inscription is the *dukkhaṃ dukkha-*

<sup>30</sup>K. 820, in *Inscriptions du Cambodge* VII, 109; for the image see Helen I. Jessup and Thierry Zéphir, eds., *Angkor et dix siècles d’art khmer* (Paris, 1997), p. 149. Except for a misprint there is no difference between the readings of Cœdès (*IC* VII) and Kamaleswar Bhattacharya (in Jessup and Zéphir, p. 41). “Pre-angkorien” is equivalent here to “Pallava”.

<sup>31</sup>Jessup and Zéphir, op. cit., p. 149.

<sup>32</sup>Henri Parmentier, *Inventaire descriptif des monuments cams de l’Annam*, Vol. I (Paris: E. Leroux, 1909), p. 244. In Vol. II (1918, p. 582) Parmentier reports that “le Buddha inscrit ... a été transporté par les émissaires de M. Rougier à Faifo et s’est perdu depuis”.

*samuppādaṃ* verse, which summarizes the four truths of the noble. It is known from three other inscriptions, one from India and two from Siam. The Go Xoai inscription has *aira* for *ariya*, a form known from inscriptions from Amarāvati and elsewhere. The verse is slightly Sanskritized, with *duḥkha*, *-samutpāda*, and *upaśama* side by side with *aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*. The sole genitive is in *-ssa* rather than *-sya*. The Go Xoai inscription gives the phrases listing the four truths in the nominative case. In all other cases that I know of — whether inscriptions or texts — the four truths are given in the accusative.

### 3.3. Mantras

The verses are followed by two mantras, which open with a traditional *tadyathā* and close with a traditional *svāhāḥ*. I do not know their source. They are typical of protective incantations (*rakṣā* mantras) of the early period. The Go Xoai mantra is the longest mantra inscription that I know of from mainland South-East Asia.<sup>33</sup> Short syllabic or “seed” (*bīja*) mantras inscribed on gold plates have been found in Kedah and in Indonesia.

### Conclusions

The inscriptions presented here add significantly to our knowledge of epigraphic use of Pāli in South-East Asia. Si Thep is the northernmost site of ancient (pre-tenth century) Pāli inscriptions so far known in Siam. Angkor Borei is the southernmost site, and the inscriptions are the first early Pāli records to be found in Cambodia. If the use of Pāli can indicate the presence of the Theravādin school, and I believe that it generally can, then the inscriptions are further evidence of an early presence of the school in the region. On the other hand, the language of the inscriptions on the Go Xoai gold plate and Tuol Preah That Buddha image reveals the presence of a Buddhist school other than the Theravāda. What school cannot be said, but that more than one school was active in the region is not surprising.

<sup>33</sup>I exclude here the clay tablets, some of which are imprinted with a long *dhāraṇī*.

The three sets of inscriptions from three different areas all include the *ye dhammā* verse, confirming its importance throughout the region (if this is something that needs to be confirmed). The Angkor Borei inscription offers a further example of the epigraphic use of the *yadā have* verses, the Si Thep stone that of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*, and the Go Xoai inscription that of the *dukkhaṃ dukkhasamuppādaṃ* verse.

Why were identical texts inscribed at different sites throughout the region? Why should epigraphic practice be similar at several centres of Buddhist culture during the 6th to 8th centuries? One possible explanation may be sought from ritual. The *ye dharmā* verse was and is a key verse in consecration ceremonies. In Northern India it was recited in the consecration of *caityas* by at least the late Pāla period. In Nepal and Tibet it has been and is recited in the consecration of *caityas*, images, *thangkas*, and books. The engraving of the *ye dhammā* verse on images and *caityas* — so common in Pāla India, and also in South-East Asia — may be seen as a physical expression, an inscribed relic, of their consecration.<sup>34</sup>

In South-East Asia — that is, amongst the Thai, Khmer, and Burmese, the Pāli texts given in the inscriptions dealt with in this paper — *ye dhammā*, *paṭiccasammuppāda*, *yadā have* and *anekajāti* — are chanted in the consecration of both images and *cetiya*s. It may not be too far-fetched to conclude that the inscribed bricks or metal plates are physical relics of *cetiya* consecration rituals conducted during the Dvāravatī, Funan, and Chenla periods, and that current practice is the product of ritual continuity.

Can this hypothesis, which remains to be tested against textual and ritual traditions, explain all of the citation inscriptions of South-East Asia? Can it explain, for example, the “public” inscriptions (those not installed within a *cetiya* but engraved on pillars or stones), such as those

<sup>34</sup>The same is probably true of the inscribing of the *ye dharmā* verse at the end of colophons in Northern India, Nepal, and Tibet (and the very few examples from Central Asia). I am grateful to William Douglas (Oxford) for pointing out the connection.



on the octagonal Sap Champa pillar, which include the *yadā have* and *anekajāti* verses? If on the one hand I am wary of imposing a single explanation on all citation inscriptions, on the other I see no reason why the ideology of consecration should not have embraced the *dhammacakkas*, one of which stood atop the Sap Champa pillar. Given the importance of the *dhammacakkas* to Dvāravarī Buddhist cult, the question is certainly worth asking.

Peter Skilling  
Nonthaburi

Sanskrit versions of the *yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā* verses

Mahāvastu II 561–62

yadā ime prādur bhavanti dharmā  
ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
athāsya kāmṅṣā vyapanenti sarvā  
yadā prajānāti sahetudharmā || (1)

yadā ime prādur bhavanti dharmā  
ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
athāsya kāmṅṣā vyapanenti sarvā  
kṣayaṃ pratyayānām upaiti || (2)

yadā ime prādur bhavanti dharmā  
ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
vidharṣitā tiṣṭhati mārasainyā  
sūryenaiva obhāsitaṃ antarīkṣaṃ || (3)

Saṅghabhedavastu I 127–28

yadā ime prādur bhavanti dharmā |  
ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
athāsya kāmṅṣā vyapayānti sarvā |  
yadā prajānāti sahetudharmam || (1)

yadā ime prādur bhavanti dharmā |  
ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
athāsya kāmṅṣā vyapayānti sarvā |  
yadā kṣayaṃ pratyayānām upaiti || (4)

yadā ime prādur bhavanti dharmā |  
ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
vidhūpayams tiṣṭhati mārasainyaṃ |  
buddho hi saṃyojanavipramuktaḥ || (7)

Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra 7.6, 9, 13

yadā tv ime prādur bhavanti dharmā  
hy ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
athāsya kāmṅṣā vyapayānti sarvā  
yadā prajānāti sahetudharmam || (1)

yadā tv ime prādur bhavanti dharmā  
hy ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
athāsya kāmṅṣā vyapayānti sarvā  
yadā kṣayaṃ pratyayānām upaiti || (4)

yadā tv ime prādur bhavanti dharmā  
hy ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
vidhūpayams tiṣṭhati mārasainyaṃ  
buddho hi saṃyojanavipramuktaḥ || (7)

Udānavarga, Brāhmaṇavarga (XXXIII)

yadā tv ime tu prabhavanti dharmā  
ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
athāsya kāmṅṣā vyapayānti sarvā  
yadā prajānāti sahetudharmam || (2)

yadā tv ime tu prabhavanti dharmā  
ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
athāsya kāmṅṣā vyapayānti sarvā  
yadā kṣayaṃ pratyayānām upaiti || (3)

yadā tv ime tu prabhavanti dharmā  
ātāpino dhyāyato brāhmaṇasya |  
vidhūpayams tiṣṭhati mārasainyaṃ  
buddho hi saṃyojanavipramukta itī ||